

1st History of Science International Conference

Connecting Worlds

Production and Circulation of
Knowledge in the First Global Age

University of Porto, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
18-20 May 2016



Website

<https://historyofscienceup.wordpress.com/>

More information

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CULTURA, ESPAÇO E MEMÓRIA



Connecting Worlds. Production and circulation of knowledge in the First Global Age

International Conference, Porto, 18-20 May 2016

Organization: CITCEM – UPorto / CIUHCT - ULisboa

Convenors: Amélia Polónia (UPORTO/ CITCEM); Henrique Leitão (U. Lisboa/ Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia da Universidade de Lisboa (CIUHCT))

Organizing Committee: Fabiano Bracht; Gisele da Conceição; Monique Palma, Wellington Bernardelli Silva Filho

Venue: Faculty of Arts, University of Porto, Portugal (www.lettras.up.pt/)

Date: 18-20 May 2016

Conference Abstract

While in the last ten years historiographical revisions have occurred both on colonial studies and the history of sciences, those tend to progress along two parallel lines, without effective communication or reciprocal understanding.

At present, studies on empire building are under revision. Previously, they were based on three main methodological premises: they usually focused on central power strategies and policies, excluding the perception of how individuals and groups contributed to historical dynamics; their analysis, insisting on formal and institutionalised processes, tended to exclude those deriving from or performing within informal and non-state regulated contexts; and finally they disregarded the active influence of the agents, the societies and the civilizations of contact, in Africa, in Asia and in America, ignoring local inputs in colonial dynamics.

Currently, new generations of scholars tend to conduct colonial studies from a more trans-national, trans-cultural and trans-imperial perspective. A good example is the output of post-colonial studies, developed since the 1980s. The more recent perspectives centred on a connected history of the colonial empires (Subrahmanyam 2007), or the agenda of a highly prolific world or global history have been contributing to a revision of those interpretations of colonial phenomena, investigating colonial dynamics by means of a broader, more complex and holistic approach (Harrison 2004, 2010, 2012), as reflected in recent publications and the organization of scientific panels and conferences on the subject.

Such a historiographical revision required the adoption of concepts and models of analysis stemming from self-organization and cooperation theories. Recent works in historiography dealing with overseas expansion and colonization also looked at the role of informal and self-organised mechanisms, and highlighted the role of traditionally

marginalised agents of empire building, including women performing as brokers and go-betweens (Polónia/ Capelão, 2016).

Simultaneously, historians of science have been discussing the parameters of what can be classified as scientific knowledge in the Early Modern Age, developing the concept of “Iberian Science” (Leitão/ Costa, 2009) or even debating the mechanisms of production of a syncretic knowledge resulting from acquisitions provided by local agents both in Asia and the Americas.

In this context, debates on the role of the go-betweens, the intermediaries among European and local bearers of knowledge are taking on a central role. The cultural translation processes requiring both the comprehension of local processes of knowledge production and the mechanisms of a global circulation of persons, commodities, information and knowledge are also receiving attention, opening new avenues of research (Renn, 2015 a, b).

New analytical proposals are currently expanding the parameters of research, according to which some aspects of modern science and the modern world are understood as global while being the result of intricate local processes. Circulation and locality became core concepts of these theoretical approaches. The analysis of processes that combine polycentric and local production of knowledge with its global circulation turns out to be fruitful in historical analysis (Livingstone, D. (2003), Raj, K. (2000a, 2000b, 2007, 2013).

The international conference “Connecting Worlds. Production and circulation of knowledge in the First Global Age” will follow these trends. It aims at exploiting their implications for the actual production of knowledge in History. Since the connection between the local and the global within the framework of colonial contexts is at stake, the conference will establish a dialogue between experts on the History of Science and specialists on global and colonial studies, thus clarifying and reciprocally reinforcing the circulation of knowledge that has been recently created in each one of the historiographical fields involved.

Presenting recent theoretical and methodological orientations also developed within both U. Porto/CITCEM and U. Lisbon/CIUHCT, the HSIC - UP aims at providing the opportunity for specialists in Colonial Studies, Global History, History of Science, Atlantic Studies or Indian Studies to initiate a crossover debate designed to establish a (re)productive dialogue and to produce innovative ideas.

Participants are invited to discuss processes by which knowledge, mainly scientific and philosophical knowledge, circulated within and across physical, cultural, social, or religious boundaries, in the context of colonial empires. The exchanges, impositions and negotiation processes underlying the shared production and circulation of individuals, information and knowledge at a global level will be the subject of this conference.

Key-note speakers will perform as pivotal elements, launching a discussion to be followed by papers presented both by senior scholars, early career researchers, and post-graduate students drawing on concrete empirical material whilst reflecting conceptually and analytically on one, or more than one, of the following topics:

- Global history and the circulation of men, commodities, information and knowledge.
- Trans-imperial and cross-cultural exchanges.
- Asymmetries, power relations and geographies of science.
- Translation processes and the mechanism of knowledge sharing and appropriation
- Brokers and go-betweens: the formal and informal agents of knowledge transmission.

Structure of the Conference

Keynote addresses will be delivered by experts on colonial history, global history and the history of sciences in each of the six sessions planned. Those will be followed by the presentation of papers, including those from current PhD and postdoc projects.

The conference is designed so as to encourage discussion and debate. Prior to the conference, accepted participants are expected to submit a piece of written work, which will be pre-circulated. This piece will consist of a summary of the research paper, up to 4,000 words. General discussion will follow specific discussants' commentaries.

Call for Papers

A 250 words abstract and a brief CV of no more than 200 words, should be submitted by email to: historyofscienceup.submission@gmail.com

Deadline for submission of paper proposals (abstracts): 30 January 2016

Selection of paper proposals and communication to participants: 28 February 2016

Pre-circulation of summary papers to discussants: 30 April 2016

More information on the Website: <https://historyofscienceup.wordpress.com/>